

6/17/68

Dear Phil,

Three joined you in today's mail, expressing their deep unease over the newest of a continuing and consistent series of assassination, so that, in a mood almost impossible for me, I, too, am depressed today. Last night I wrote a letter to one of the country's more prominent politicians, a great friend of both murdered Kennedy's, remind him of the pain on turned political backs and quoting my January prediction that Bobby's silence would be his death warrant. In this I asked if the bell tolled now for him? That is the way I feel. These things will not end unless they are ended, and there are so few willing to run the risk or, in a formulation more widely applicable, take the time. And none to extend any meaningful help.

Depression is so foreign to me I have never analyzed its origin. Today I just wonder while I do other things. Perhaps the immediate cause of this spell is my financial inability to do what I must. My fifth book has been ready for the camera since September and I dare not risk the added debt; and I should be working in New Orleans and cannot, for the moment, get there.

It will soon pass off and I'll be tearing into other things. But the mere fact of the mood of depression disturbs me.

Soaking of New Orleans, have you any suggestions for me there?

Is this really "the time of the assassins"? It is the time of assassinations, but I think were I to entitle the time I'd call it the "time of abdications". We have these assassinations only because they are possible. They are possible only because of decay in society and the standards of life (meaning not those of the Bureau of Labor Statistics) and because all of those to whom society normally and in the past properly turned for leadership have forfeited their rights to leadership. Tick them off for yourself: the intellectuals, the lawyers, the writers and the press, all in the phrase of the younger generations, rat-finks, all quit....So, we agree that the silence is ugly. I hope no worse in the troubled-too-rich land that is half way between Hitler 1934 and Orwell 1984.

I didn't realize that the deep, aging fatigue showed. I feel it, everywhere save the mind, which is alert but forgetting. However, there is always that needed ounce, and I never feel that I have to expend it....As the poet reads it, could it be loneliness, the fought futility of those not present? I have tired, of course, indeed, aged in the past four years, and I do not feel the champion of a futile or lost cause. I feel I will succeed, without being able to estimate when. But it is an awful weight that is not lifted by all those hands that could help and have the same obligation to

I'll not bother you with the poems until I have all of them or as many as I can hope to get. Then I'll welcome your opinion and, if possible, interpretation. By then perhaps I'll have a dependable psychiatric evaluation, the evaluation being more likely than its dependability.

Congratulations on your marriage. I'm with Shelley, that nothing in this world is single. Jean has a pleasant voice; that much I know of her. Should I get near there, I'll happily accept your invitation. Please understand the rush that sends you all the typos I hope you can decipher. Best regards to you both,

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A JOURNAL OF POETRY AND OPINION

editor Philip Boatright

15 June 68

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Dear Hal,

It is, as Rimbaud said (though he referred to other ills in another century) surely "the time of the assassins..." For us, Jean and I, the loss is evidenced by the awful silence now: we stood in the pouring rain just a few short weeks ago to hear a man (who also stood, of course, in the rain with us) speak of new ideas, new (and cleaner, we believe) things to come. And a day or two later we were there when he thanked Nebraskans for giving him victory. He was even gracious enough to autograph a copy of his remarkable book for Jean--though an aide tried to shield him from such an enthusiastic admirer.

There is no voice now, no grace. And the silence is ugly.

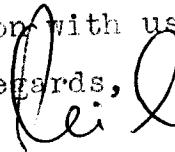
You mention sending some poems--fine, we'll be glad to have a look at them and tell you what we think. We both have, I dare say, some experience in reading work by both really and supposedly disturbed minds. Even so, any response is largely subjective...but we'd be genuinely interested in reading what you have, so send it along whenever you like.

Books. Yes, there were three that I gave you to pass on to Garrison's office--but one (du Berrier's Labor's International Network) was returned (received here 13 April). Only the two Courtney books I mentioned to you last time are left; they haven't been returned yet, were not with the stuff from Lynn Loisel that came back in April. A small matter, Hal, and I know the Garrison office is busy. Still, the Courtney books are part of a time in my life I still haven't explained (to myself) nearly well enough yet. I'd like to have them, when the investigation is finished with them, for whatever small use they may be to me sometime.

You keep thanking me for my help...and I appreciate your courtesy but think I have actually helped you little, if at all. So, again I say that if there is ever anything you think I might be able to help with--don't hesitate to get in touch. Your letters sometimes sound like you are down to your very last ounce of strength...I (respectfully) ask you to take best care possible of yourself.

I have news, too, of another kind--and I'd like to share it with you: I was married last month; 'Miss Jean Shannon' (my associate on STEPPENWOLF) is now Mrs. Philip Boatright. Should your travels bring you to Omaha again, on whatever business, we do hope you can find time to stop and have dinner and a bit of conversation with us. Telephone, by the way, is 345-1469. Anytime.

--Warmest regards,



Philip Boatright